Remarks/Arguments:

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1, 3-13, and 15-28 remain in the application. Claims 1, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24, 26, and 27 have been amended. Claims 2 and 14 are being cancelled herewith. Claims 15, 16, 27, and 28 have been withdrawn from consideration.

In item 6 on page 3 of the above-identified Office action, the Examiner requests affirmation of the election to prosecute claims 1-14 and 17-26. Affirmation of the election to prosecute claims 1-14 and 17-26 is made herewith.

In item 8 on page 3 of the above-identified Office action, claims 10 and 24 have been rejected as being indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

More specifically, the Examiner has stated that the meaning of "viewing/inspection" is rendered indefinite by the inclusion of the "/". Claims 10 and 24 have been amended so as to facilitate prosecution of the application. Therefore, it is respectfully believed that the rejection has been overcome.

It is accordingly believed that the claims meet the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Should the Examiner find any further objectionable items, counsel would appreciate a telephone call during which the matter may be resolved. The above-noted changes to the claims are provided solely for cosmetic or clarificatory reasons. The changes are not provided for overcoming the prior art nor for any reason related to the statutory requirements for a patent.

In item 10 on page 4 of the Office action, claims 1, 4-6, and 12 have been rejected as being fully anticipated by Smith (U.S. Patent No. 6,050,417) under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

In item 10 on page 4 of the Office action, claims 1 and 12 have been rejected as fully anticipated by Weder (U.S. Patent No. 5,836,448) under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Claims 1–2, 4-8, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

In item 10 on page 4 of the Office action, claims 1–2, 4-8, and 12 have been rejected as fully anticipated by Hamada et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,723,860) (hereinafter "Hamada") under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

In item 10 on page 4 of the Office action, claims 1, 9, and 11 have been rejected as fully anticipated by Thomas (U.S. Patent No. 4,892,193) under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

In item 10 on page 4 of the Office action, claims 1, 9, and 11 have been rejected as fully anticipated by Bonjean (U.S. Patent No. 3,792,771) under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

In item 10 on page 4 of the Office action, claim 1 has been rejected as fully anticipated by Hardigg (U.S. Patent No. 3,003,622) under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

In item 11 on page 5 of the Office action, claims 13-14, 18-23, 25, and 26 have been rejected as being fully anticipated by any one of Smith (U.S. Patent No. 6,050,417), Weder (U.S. Patent No. 5,836,448), Hamada (U.S. Patent No. 5,723,860), Thomas (U.S. Patent No. 4,892,193), Bonjean (U.S. Patent No. 3,792,771), and Hardigg (U.S. Patent No. 3,003,622) under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

As will be explained below, it is believed that the claims were patentable over the cited art in their original form and the claims have, therefore, not been amended to overcome the references.

Before discussing the prior art in detail, it is believed that a brief review of the invention as claimed, would be helpful.

Claims 1 and 13 call for, *inter alia*:

> the polymer cushion being formed of a polymer having at least one of a viscosity and an adhesiveness that is greater when tensile forces are exerted on the protective device orthogonally in relation to the peripheral region of the lithographic reflection mask than when shearing forces are exerted on the protective device parallel to the peripheral region.

According to the present invention as claimed, a polymer cushion is provided which has a viscosity and/or adhesiveness which is greater in a direction perpendicular to a surface of the lithographic reflection mask than in a direction parallel to the surface thereof. Accordingly, it is easier to remove the protective device, including the polymer cushion with a rotational movement parallel to the mask surface than by trying to pull it from the mask surface in a direction perpendicular to the mask surface. According to the present invention as claimed, the polymer cushion, made of a polymer having anisotropic viscosity and/or adhesiveness properties, is used for mounting a protective device (like a pellicle frame or another protective case) to a lithographic reflection mask. Due to the anisotropic viscosity and/or adhesiveness of polymer cushion according to the present invention as claimed, the protective device is easily removable from the protected lithographic reflection mask without leaving significant amounts of polymer particles remaining on the lithographic reflection mask. Contrary thereto, in the prior art, the removal of a pellicle frame from lithographic mask produced a plurality of particles which contaminated the mask surface (page 3, first line of the specification).

On page 5, lines 3 to 6 of the Office Action the Examiner alleges that the references cited in item 10 disclose the anisotropic viscosity and adhesiveness properties. However, the Examiner fails to indicate any disclosure of this feature in the cited references. None of the cited documents disclose any viscosity or adhesiveness properties of a material of a polymer cushion, as recited in claims 1 and 13 of the instant application.

The only reference disclosing any polymer cushion is Hamada. However, Hamada completely fails, like all the other documents, to disclose any anisotropic viscosity or anisotropic adhesiveness of a polymer material used for the adhesive layer. Instead, Hamada only discloses that a pressure-sensitive adhesive is used, which is formed like a barrel vault, thereby preventing the formation of air gaps between the adhesive and the photo mask surface (lines 12-20 of the abstract). Accordingly, an air-tight sealing between a pellicle and the mask surface is obtained which prevents any air gaps (8), which are illustrated in Fig. 4 of Hamada. Hamada discloses that this is achieved by the particular cross-sectional shape of the adhesive layer (3), as is illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2. However, Hamada does provide any disclosure regarding anisotropic viscosity or anisotropic adhesiveness.

Moreover, the anisotropic viscosity and adhesiveness of the present invention as claimed, are material properties of the polymer cushion. The anisotropic properties do not result from a specific outer shape of the polymer material. Accordingly, it is respectfully believed that the observation of the Examiner regarding the first and second cushioning member (34, 40) of Smith (Fig. 1) and the deformable foam layers of Weder (Figs. 2 and 3), are not accurate.

The reference does not show the polymer cushion being formed of a polymer having at least one of a viscosity and an adhesiveness that is greater when tensile forces are exerted on the protective device orthogonally in relation to the peripheral region of the lithographic reflection mask than when shearing forces are exerted on the protective device parallel to the peripheral region, as recited in claims 1 and 13 of the instant application.

Furthermore, it is respectfully believed that the Examiner does not consider the actual meaning of the claimed feature. This is because, in item 13 of the Office Action the Examiner alleges that the particular choice of those materials claimed in claims 3 and 17 fails to provide any new and unexpected result by its selection. However, the unexpected result is that the anisotropic viscosity and/or adhesiveness of the polymer cushion as recited in claims 1 and 13 and which is further defined in claims 3 and 17. As stated above, due to the anisotropic properties of the polymer cushion material, it is easier to remove the protective device (including the polymer cushion) with a rotational movement around the normal direction of the lithographic mask surface than by trying to pull the protective device from the lithographic mask surface in direction normal to the mask surface.

Moreover, in the last two lines of item 10 of the Office action, it is respectfully believed that the Examiner appears to misinterpret the rotational movement parallel to the mask surface. This is because the Examiner refers to a rotational movement, as shown in Fig. 5 of Thomas. Thomas discloses that the movement is normal to rather than parallel to a surface.

In the instant application claim 11 depends on claim 1. The last paragraph of claim 1 refers to the comparatively low viscosity and adhesiveness upon application of shearing forces parallel to the lithographic mask surface. In Fig. 5 of Thomas, Thomas merely discloses that two parts of a case are rotationally moved relative to one another. This movement is not a movement parallel to a lithographic mask surface nor is it a movement parallel to a main surface of the lower case portion illustrated in Figure 5.

In item 13 on page 6 of the Office action, claims 3 and 17 have been rejected as being obvious over Hamada (U.S. Patent No. 5,723,860) under 35 U.S.C. § 103. Since claims 1 and 13 are believed to be allowable over Hamada, dependent claims 3 and 17 are believed to be allowable as well.

In item 14 on page 6 of the Office action, claims 10 and 24 have been rejected as being obvious over Bonjean (U.S. Patent No. 3,792,771) in view of Streit et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,199,568) (hereinafter "Streit") under 35 U.S.C. § 103. Streit does not make up for the deficiencies of Bonjean. Since claims 1 and 13 are believed to be allowable, dependent claims 10 and 24 are believed to be allowable as well.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claims 1 or 13. Claims 1 and 13 are, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art and since all of the dependent claims are ultimately dependent on claims 1 or 13, they are believed to be patentable as well.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-28 are solicited.

In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel respectfully requests a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out.

If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made.

Please charge any other fees which might be due with respect to Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the Deposit Account of Lerner Greenberg Stemer LLP, No. 12-1099.

Respectfully submitted,

For Applicant(s)

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